# MAJESTIC MEZBAN

## Chittagonians celebrate togetherness with a beef-dominated meal

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**PHOTOS: YASIN ARAFATH RIFAT**

*Mezban* is a regional feast where people are invited to enjoy a meal with white rice and beef.

But it is not only about a meal with beef, it is also a social gathering which pulls together people from different walks of life. It is about the pungent fulsome aroma coming from the meat bowls, it's the time when your plates get overloaded with mouth smouldering spicy beef, but you still cannot get over with it.

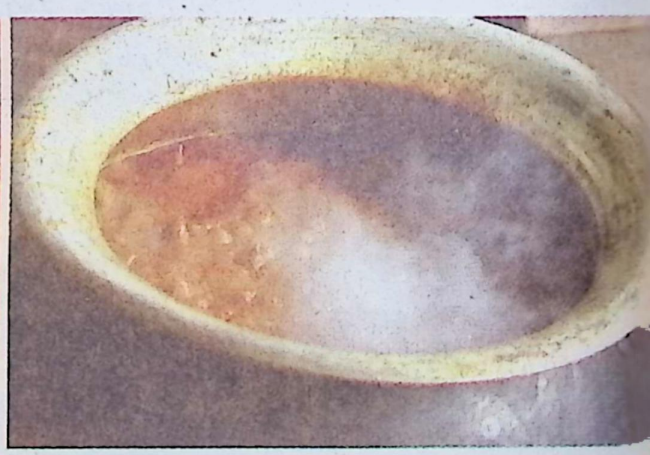
It is about one of the biggest celebratory confabs that demand to be marked as the unique culture of Chittagong.

### The Tongue-tingling Food

*Mezban's* beef is not like any other beef recipe. It has a fixed menu which might not give you enough opportunities to explore a number of dishes, but the succulent meat that you have on your plate is all that you need.

Hasan Mahmud, a chef in Chittagong has been cooking *Mezban* since 1995. "I have learnt this skill from my father in law, late Jamal Baburchi, who was one of the top-ranked chefs in Chittagong," says Hasan. He gives a rough estimation of cooking Mezban. "For 1 thousand people, generally we arrange 5 cows. It is a beef based meal, and it's





### What's the Celebration?

The word *Mezban* comes from the Persian where it means a host. However at present the word denotes to a community feasting originated in Chittagong. In Chittagong sometimes the word *Mezban* becomes *mejjan* or *mezbani*. An age-old tradition started in Muslim community, people arrange *Mezban* for various purposes like when someone dies (*Kulkhani* and *Challisha*), death anniversary, Eid-e- Miladunnabi, birth and naming of a child, circumcision of a boy child, ear piercing, starting of a new business or just for reunion and social get together.

open to everyone, hence we always need to have some extra arrangement."

The main dish of *Mezban* is its fiery and fantastic beef. The meat is braised with chef's secret combo of pepper, cumin, *garam masala* and other herbs. "There is one special mixture that we use in the dish to bring the flavour. We buy all the herbs and spices from the local market, and they go through a processing before getting powdered. We call this spice, "Radhuni" (its not the *Radhuni* company, the spice is called *Radhuni*.) We put this special mixture in the meat and the result is a spicy meat steeped with thick reddish gravy."